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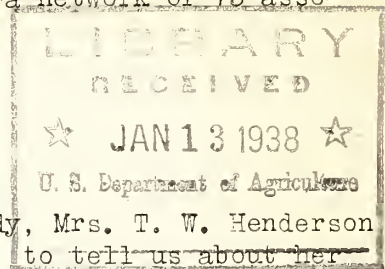
A HOME FOR PORTIA

A radio conversation between Mrs. T. W. Henderson, Rural Homemaker, Christian County, Kentucky, and Everett Mitchell, presented December 8, 1937, in the Home Demonstration Radio Hour and broadcast by a network of 75 associated National Broadcasting Company Radio stations.

--ooOoo--

EVERETT MITCHELL:

And now we're going to hear from a Kentucky lady, Mrs. T. W. Henderson of Christian County. Mrs. Henderson has come a long way, ~~to tell us about her~~ little daughter Portia, and why that youngster -- she's only seven years old -- is what I consider a very lucky young lady. It gives me great pleasure indeed to present Portia's mother, Mrs. Henderson, a rural homemaker of Christian County, Kentucky.



MRS. HENDERSON:

Mr. Mitchell, I'm afraid you have been misinformed.

MITCHELL:

How's that.

HENDERSON:

I really didn't plan to talk about Portia. My subject is -- is --

MITCHELL:

I know what your subject was. It was "What the Extension Service Has Accomplished in Making Rural Homes Convenient for Children."

HENDERSON:

That's right.

MITCHELL:

But you see, Mrs. Henderson, when I found out that you have a little girl named Portia -- that her first bed was a clothes basket painted \_\_\_\_\_, that she has a small dining table of her own, and chairs -- and a small work table -- Well, would you mind, Mrs. Henderson, if I'm not too personal, would you mind telling us about Portia?

HENDERSON:

Why, not at all. But you are quite out of order. Or else my talk is

(over)

MITCHELL:

Tell us about Portia, and then you can go back to the Extension Service, and "What It Has Accomplished."

HENDERSON:

All right. Some years ago, in 1931, a group of seven mothers in Christian County enrolled in the first "child training" project. We wanted to learn how to make our homes more pleasant for our children. More pleasant, and more convenient. As I said, there were seven mothers in the original group -- seven mothers and ten children. By 1935, there were ninety mothers, and 226 children.

MITCHELL:

That means ninety homes, in Christian County, where the children have all the conveniences you and Mr. Henderson provided for Portia?

HENDERSON:

Yes, more or less. Ever since Portia was born, we've been making changes for her benefit. For example, we wanted her to sleep in comfort, so she had her own bed, from the very start. Her first bed was a painted clothes basket, as you said, a clothes basket with a standard. Next, she had a medium-sized bed -- then a larger one.

MITCHELL:

Reminds me of the "Three Bears" -- a tiny bed, a middle-sized bed, and a great big bed.

HENDERSON:

Portia would like that. Well, then, with sleep taken care of, we helped our baby build good food habits by making her a tiny table and chair. As she grew, she had chairs the correct height, so she could eat with the family. To keep her interested in health and cleanliness, she has a low shelf and mirror for washing, and wash cloth and towels on low hooks. She can get her own clothes, and put them away herself -- you see they're in low dresser drawers, or hanging on low hooks. Now isn't that enough, about my small daughter?

MITCHELL:

Oh, don't forget about the doll furniture.

HENDERSON:

Oh yes -- Portia helped to paint the doll furniture -- all kinds of furniture, made from boxes. Working with these tiny chairs and tables and so on has given her a keen interest in housekeeping. I'm glad to say.

MITCHELL:

I suppose she does her furniture-painting on a special low table.

HENDERSON:

A special work table. Her first work table was a wooden box, with legs attached. The sides of the box were rounded out, to give room for the child's knees. When she grew a little older she had a larger table. Last year, when Portia was six, we raised that table by putting new legs on it. Of course it's placed so she has good light on her work. And her blackboard is near by. Now may I please go back seven years ago, to the seven women who started this project in child care and training?

MITCHELL:

Yes, Mrs. Henderson, now you can tell us "What the Extension Service Has Accomplished in Making Rural Homes Convenient for Children."

HENDERSON:

Good.

MITCHELL:

But first, Farm and Home friends, let me explain that the Extension Staff of the University of Kentucky considers Mrs. Henderson one of the outstanding local leaders in child training and parent education. They also consider her an outstanding parent -- which means she practices what she preaches. Now Mrs. Henderson, tell us more, please, about the seven pioneer mothers of Christian County, Kentucky, who took their jobs seriously enough to do something about it.

HENDERSON:

Well, outside of the original seven, not many mothers were interested in the project until 1933, when the Christian County Homemakers' Association (which is the County Home Demonstration organization) held a Better Homes exhibit, and a tour of improved homes. Two of these "improved homes" belong to members of our study group. They had "adjusted" their homes to meet the needs of their children. When the visiting mothers saw all the conveniences, made especially for children -- and how much these conveniences meant to the youngsters, and also to the parents, well -- Mr. Mitchell, that exhibit did more to create interest in child development than the entire two years of project work!

MITCHELL:

Because seeing is believing, Mrs. Mitchell. Didn't you notice how interested I was, when you told me about Portia's furniture? Now that was something I could see.

HENDERSON:

And you couldn't "see" a project.

MITCHELL:

Not so easily.

HENDERSON:

Well, the study group increased, as mothers learned from each other, and now, as I said before, by 1935 there were 90 mothers and more than 200 children.

MITCHELL:

Can fathers enroll in the study group?

HENDERSON:

Unfortunately, no. But they give us excellent cooperation, and they're certainly good help, with the practical side of the work.

MITCHELL:

I should think they'd be a help with the saw and hammer.

HENDERSON:

Invaluable! Although many of the women, too, have learned to "drive a wicked nail." Mr. Mitchell, I don't want you to get the idea that small chairs and tables and low hooks for coats and hats were the only points in our study program. We also covered the even-more-important problems of physical care, habit formation, character development and emotional development.

MITCHELL:

But those are abstract things I can't see. Tell us more about the changes you made in the homes of Christian County -- changes for children.

HENDERSON:

I couldn't begin to tell you all the changes we made -- they're so numerous, and so different. You probably know that most homes today are built for grown-ups, with little thought for children. I suppose every parent realizes that the biggest business of the home is producing happy, well-adjusted and efficient adults. We have tried to remember that these traits -- happiness, adjustment, and efficiency -- are acquired in childhood, and infancy. So, one direct and practical result of our Extension program, in child care and training, is the reorganization of our homes, with the children in mind. In my own community, practically every family with small children has made adjustments in every room in the house.

MITCHELL:

Parlor, bedroom, and bath -- all equipped for children?



HENDERSON:

Yes sir. From old chairs, we've made or remodeled comfortable chairs of the correct height, so children can rest their feet on the floor. We've made low book shelves where the child can keep his own books -- Mother Goose and the old fairy stories. For school children, we've provided low study tables and chairs, with good light. In some of our living rooms we have storage space -- cupboards and drawers -- for children's toys and games. Such changes make these living rooms real "family rooms."

MITCHELL:

Not much kin to the old-fashioned stuffy parlor. I suppose you've also "adjusted" the dining rooms.

HENDERSON:

Oh yes. Some mothers have found out it's best to serve the younger children before the family is served. The youngsters sit at small individual tables, in small chairs, and their food is served in their own special dishes. Naturally, meal time in these homes is a happy occasion.

MITCHELL:

Sounds like a Utopian version of Lilliput Land. Now what about bedroom and bath.

HENDERSON:

Well, since it's a good plan for each child to sleep alone, most homes have individual beds, equipped with boxes or steps so the child can climb into bed by himself, as soon as he's old enough. And then, in these "adjusted" bedrooms -- the children keep their belongings in the lowest dresser drawers. The drawers are partitioned, to make "a place for everything." The closets are equipped with low hooks, rods, shelves and hangers.

MITCHELL:

And the bath?

HENDERSON:

In the bath room, the wash basin, wash cloth, towels and soap are within reach of the children. If they use the regular basin, there's a box or step to stand on. For babies, and very young children, there's a special toilet chair. And, of course the well-adjusted bath room is furnished with tooth brushes of the right size and design, and individual containers of toothpaste and powder. To remind children of health habits -- and they have to be reminded, even in the best-adjusted houses! -- some mothers use colored picture posters. For children who can read, a bulletin board's a good reminder.

MITCHELL:

That's a good business-like suggestion. Like the daily calendar of a high-powered executive, the calendar which reminds him of duties to be done.

(over)

HENDERSON:

Yes, that's the business side of the "adjusted" home. Now the play side. I wish you could see the play rooms, made of spare bedrooms or unused rooms. Play rooms with boxes and shelves for games and toys -- a fine place to play when the weather's bad. And when the weather's good, many a child in Christian County has an out-of-door room to play in -- with a swing, and a trapeze, and a croquet set. Plenty of space for jumping and running and skipping games.

MITCHELL:

Now that sounds very attractive, Mrs. Henderson, but I am a practical man. How much does it cost?

HENDERSON:

Not much, in money. In Christian County, we make most of the equipment ourselves at home, from lumber on the farm, or from boxes we get for nothing. And the paint doesn't cost much.

MITCHELL:

And you can see the good effect these physical adjustments are making on the habits of the children?

HENDERSON:

Yes indeed. In the homes rearranged for their convenience, children acquire good sleeping habits, good food habits, good habits of elimination and cleanliness. They become more orderly, more self-confident and dependable. Mr. Mitchell, would you like me to summarize a few of the things I've said?

MITCHELL:

Yes, I wish you would.

HENDERSON:

Well, we've found that you can teach good sleeping habits by means of a comfortable bed, the right size and the correct height. You can teach good food habits with the right food, served in the right dishes, on the right-sized table. You can teach good elimination habits with the use of a toilet chair in early infancy. And, to teach a child to be clean -- and to like to be clean -- give him a low wash basin, low rack for toothbrush and wash cloth, and poster or bulletin board for reminders. To teach orderliness -- let him have his own books on his own book shelves, other personal belongings in low dresser drawers, coats and hats on low hooks, rods, and hangers. There's no use telling a child to put away his mittens and hang up his coat, unless there's a place for these things.

MITCHELL:

With that, I fully concur.

(over)



HENDERSON:

And doing things for himself helps a youngster to become self-confident and independent. Having his own things and a place for everything gives him a feeling of pride of possession, and teaches him to respect other people's property. In conveniently arranged homes, we find that children readily learn patience, punctuality, honesty, unselfishness and sportsmanship.

MITCHELL:

Mrs. Henderson, you're making me realize I was born thirty years too soon.

HENDERSON:

In my day, Mr. Mitchell, and maybe in yours too, there wasn't so much interest in "parent education! And naturally that has to come before we can have these courses in child training and development.

MITCHELL:

Well, I'm glad to hear about your work in Christian County, Kentucky, and the ninety homes with the 226 lucky youngsters. You've shown us what a group of seven women can do -- when they put their heads together. What sort of project are you working on now?

HENDERSON:

Oh, there's so much interest now in child training and parent education that we have a major county program. Our subject for 1937-38 is "Family Relationships and Recreation in the Home."

MITCHELL:

You'll have to tell us about that some time. And thank you very much, Mrs. Henderson, for coming up here from Kentucky, to talk with us today.

HENDERSON:

I've enjoyed it, Mr. Mitchell.

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